

VI. Disaster Application Centers

I. Description

Disaster assistance programs are made available under disaster declarations by the President and the Governor. The primary functions of these programs are:

- A. To *register applicants* for disaster assistance *and to provide follow-up* services for those already registered.
- B. To *provide public information* and continuing assistance in disaster areas.
- C. To *support community recovery, restoration and rebuilding* efforts.
- D. To *promote community preparedness* for potential disasters.

II. Purpose

Disaster Application Centers represent a transition from initial disaster response activities such as disseminating information concerning available assistance programs and processing of registrations and applications to activities focused on individual and community recovery, restoration, and rebuilding issues.

The Centers are designed to not only register individuals for appropriate assistance programs, but to accommodate the needs of individuals who need to complete processes begun either at the Centers or by teleregistration, who have specific questions about program eligibility, pending applications for assistance, or responses they have received to their applications.

III. Services

The Centers offer services aimed at facilitating community and individual recovery, restoration, and rebuilding processes. The Centers are intended to be the focal point for the provision of community-oriented services and educational information offered by local government agencies and community-based organizations. Local, State, Federal, and voluntary agencies are represented so as to meet the evolving needs of those impacted by the disaster.

IV. Locations

Disaster Application Centers are designed to serve multi-community areas. Centers are located based on physical damage assessments and the areas of concentration from which disaster assistance registrations were made. Site selection considerations also include public transportation and freeway accessibility and, the structural safety of facilities available for long-term occupancy.

V. Types of Services at Centers

- A. ***Small Business Administration (SBA)*** - Providing low interest rate loans for home/personal property losses and damages.
- B. ***FEMA Disaster Housing Assistance Program (408A)*** - This program helps people who cannot or should not live in their homes.
- C. ***FEMA Disaster Mortgage and Rental Assistance Program (408B)*** - This emergency grant program helps people who, as a result of the disaster, have lost their job or business and face foreclosure or eviction from their homes.
- D. ***Individual Family Grant Program (IFGP)*** - Grants may be available to those eligible, who are unable to meet disaster-related necessary expenses and serious needs for which assistance is unavailable or inadequate.

- E. ***Internal Revenue Service (IRS)*** - Guidance provided in obtaining tax relief for disaster casualty losses.
- F. ***Social Security Assistance (SSA)*** - Help in expediting checks delayed by the disaster, and in applying for benefits.
- G. ***Veterans Administration (VA)*** - Guidance in obtaining death benefits, pensions, and insurance settlements.
- H. ***Crisis Counseling*** - Short term intervention counseling is available for emotional and mental health problems caused or aggravated by the disaster.
- I. ***Disaster Unemployment Assistance Employment Development Department (EDD)*** - Provides weekly benefit payments to those out of work due to the disaster.
- J. ***Local Department of Aging*** - Provides disaster relief assistance to the senior population, geared to avoid long line waits, and an understanding of the forms and process.
- K. ***Housing and Urban Development (HUD)*** - Section 8 Rental Certificate Program - To assist very low-income families.
- L. ***Contractor's Licensing*** - Homeowners may request guidance in obtaining licensed contractors to assist in repair or restoration of damaged property.
- M. ***American Red Cross*** - Immediate assistance with food, clothing.
- N. ***Salvation Army*** - Provides food vouchers, and clothing, immediately following the disaster.
- O. ***Department of Motor Vehicles*** - Provides replacement of documents and fee extensions.

Other agencies and volunteers as are necessary and available will also be represented. Refer to the layout suggested by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at the end of this chapter for an idea of the floor plan and traffic flow at a DAC. While a waiting area is available, special need individuals are assumed to have preference over the able-bodied in traffic flow.

The Role of the AAA in the Disaster Application Center

The Aging Network is represented at the Disaster Application Center (DAC) by the staff of the local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). The role of the AAA is not quite the same as that of other agencies. The primary function of the AAA is to assist the elderly victims who are going through the center. This involves first making the representatives of other agencies aware of some of the special problems older persons often have during and after a disaster, and second, accompanying the elderly through the center. Of course, like the other agencies the AAA will also interview elderly victims as regards services that it can provide.

More specifically, the AAA role in staffing DACs should include the following:

I. Personnel to Staff the AAA Desk at the Center

There should be at least four AAA representatives on duty at a center at any one time. Since the centers may be open as long as ten or twelve hours a day, two or more shifts will be necessary. The ideal staffing pattern would include:

- A. Social workers or information and referral specialist experienced in working with the elderly, who are familiar with the functioning of the existing social services structure, and who can solve the unusual problems that are sure to occur.
- B. One or two (or more in larger disasters) disaster advocates from the communities who know the elderly and who are known by them.
- C. A person designated as a supervisor or team leader of the DAC activities.

II. Supplies

In operating the center desk, the personnel will need the following supplies:

- A. *Identification badges* giving the name of the AAA and the name of the individual.

- B. ***Information blanks*** to obtain basic information for follow-up activities.
- C. ***Legal pads, pens, pencils, stapler, paper clips.***
- D. ***Brochures*** for the elderly describing the function of the AAA.
- E. ***Brochures*** or leaflets on the other services provided by the AAA that would be most helpful to disaster victims.
- F. ***Phone numbers*** of the agencies that disaster center might need to contact.

III. What To Do

The staff assigned to the center should be at the center at least a half-hour before opening time. During this period, the staff should establish some contact with other agencies, explaining the role of the AAA and finding out what each of the other agencies will be doing.

When the center opens, it should be made clear to the intake workers that elderly are to be referred to the AAA station. Disaster Advocates should go up to the elderly person, explain what the AAA will be doing, and take the elderly individual first to the intake interviewer, then to the appropriate agency. If the elderly person needs to be escorted from agency to agency, the Disaster Advocate will be prepared to do so.

If possible, arrange for representatives of the other agencies to come to the more infirm elderly, rather than require the elderly to wait in several lines.

Explain to the elderly that the AAA personnel will be contacting them again to see if their problems are being solved, and will help if needed in obtaining any additional action from other agencies after the centers are closed.

Transportation to and from the disaster will probably be a major problem. The AAA may be the only source for this service, using the vehicles normally used in Title III. Providing this transportation service is, in addition to serving an urgent need, extremely helpful in establishing credibility with victims and with other agencies.

